

# eCoverPro

*making your own professional ebook covers*



# Create Your Own Professional eCovers With Photoshop!

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Examples in this manual are demonstrated in Adobe Photoshop 7.0 environment. However, methods covered in this manual can be used in Adobe Photoshop versions 5.0 and newer. But do note that Adobe Photoshop functions and features may vary depending the version of your Adobe Photoshop program.

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# How To Use This Manual To Create Your Own eCovers In Photoshop

without any external plug-ins or third party software!

Dear Photoshop User,

Thank you for investing in this manual. Now, you have your E-book done but what next? You are now looking to get a professional eCover designed to give your E-book a professional look and an edge over other E-books out there in the Internet marketplace.

But what really concerns you now is that you just DON'T have the big bucks to hire a graphic designer to get the job done for you. Now, if you have more than one E-book, that can also mean an average "\$99 times the number of eCovers you need for each E-book you have written" that you have to fork out of your wallet!

Forget software that create eCovers for you, too. They cost nearly as much and still require a degree of designing skills on your part. In addition, you may not like the end results!

That is why this manual is for you; to learn how to make your own professional eCovers with Photoshop without having to spend a bomb on hiring your own graphic designer or even buy a software that can't give you your desired results!

By giving a "tangible" appearance to your E-book, your E-book's credibility and perceived value will be so much higher. Now, fire up Adobe Photoshop program and hop on to the first chapter. This will be quick and easy and in less than an hour from now, you will have all of what it takes to design unlimited eCovers for yourself - professionally!

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# Create Your Own Professional eCovers With Photoshop!

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# Chapter 1

## The Secrets of a Realistic eCover



*An E-book cover I  
have created*

Many have attempted to create 3D eCovers in Photoshop environment alone... without much success, unfortunately. Speaking from an expert's point of view, this is because they often start with cutting out the "3D" shape of an E-book and add elements to it by using the Distort function in the Free Transform gizmo. And the end result? A jumbled up mixture of text, shapes and graphics that are completely *out of perspective*.

One of the secrets to creating a realistic eCover is **the perspective**. By having every element in your E-book matching in perspective, you have already achieved the first step in making your own eCover look **real**!

The only way of making sure that every element in your eCover is in perspective is to first create them on a flat perspective, then flattening all of the elements into one single layer and finally distorting it into perspective.

This concept is rather similar to making a cardboard box. First, the cardboard is printed with whatever design that is required, and then folded into the shape of a box. By following this workflow, we can ensure that everything is in place and in perspective – **no guesswork involved**.

The other secret to a realistic eCover is **lighting**. When you cast a light upon your eCover image, correctly formed light/dark shades and shadows will really boost the realism of it. The basic theory here is this: shadows form on the opposite side of the light source, but we'll discuss more than that in the the fourth chapter.

Now, for the good news: I've also included other techniques in this manual that will put you years ahead of the other so-called professional graphic designers! Now, aren't you glad? That should put a smile on your face. 😊

When all of these methods are combined, you will be able to create a high-quality 3D eCover that is realistic and attractive.

## Chapter 2

### Printing on the Cardboard



Since we are going to use the concept of a cardboard box, let's get accustomed to using the "cardboard terminology". First, we are going to create the *flat* version of the eCover. If you are not sure of what I am talking about, grab a cardboard box and pull it apart so that it makes a flat cardboard. OK, back to Photoshop.

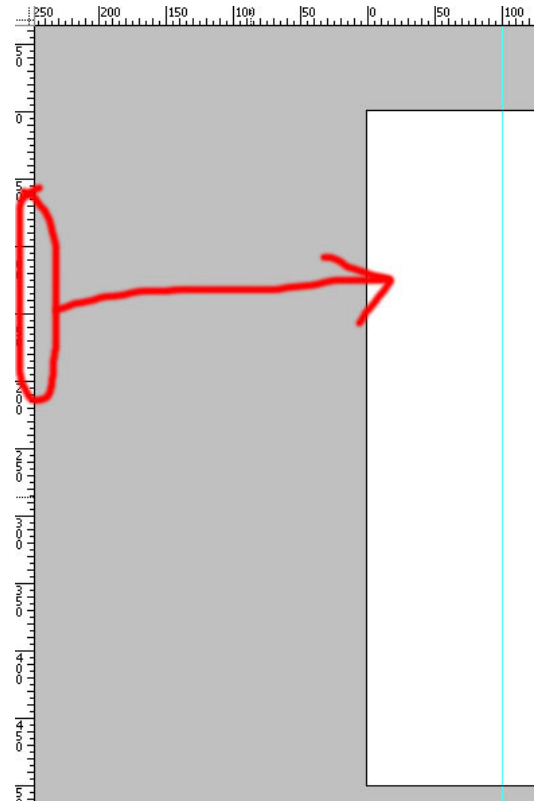
We are going to create two sides of the box, the front and the side since only the two sides are viewable in our eCover shot, like the one shown to the left.

First, create a new document in Photoshop. Go to *File > New* and type in 500 pixels for both width and height. Normally, you'd want to create your "flat cardboard" design at a much greater size than your final 3D cover

Now, press Control + R to bring out the Ruler if you don't have them on by default. Right click the ruler and choose Pixels as units.

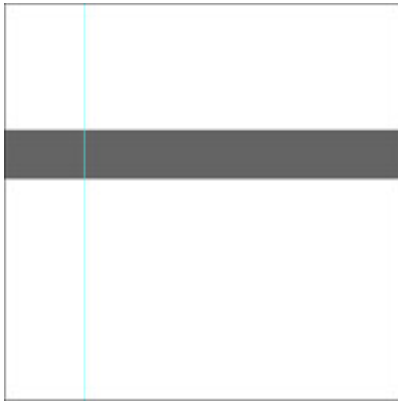
What we want to do is to allocate the 100 pixels wide area from the left to be the "side" of the cover, and the remaining 400 pixels wide area to the right the "front".

First, put your mouse on the vertical Ruler as shown in the screenshot and click it. Then, without releasing the mouse button, drag it towards the right while holding the Shift key.





Once the ruler snaps to the 100 pixel mark on the horizontal Ruler, release the mouse button and the Shift key. Now that we have a clear boundary as to where each region belongs to, let's start creating the cover!



First, create a new layer above your *Background* layer. Then, grab the *Rectangular Marquee Tool* and drag a horizontal bar across the entire canvas, covering both the “*side*” and “*front*” regions. Choose a dark grey colour as your *Foreground Colour* and fill the selection by pressing ALT + Backspace.

Your canvas should like something like the image here.



Next, add in the title of your E-book in the grey bar and set its colour to white to contrast against it. I have also added in a few extra lines using the *Horizontal Type Tool*; these may serve as taglines if you are creating an actual eCover.

Notice how I added a smaller version of the book title in the “*side*” region too – this is done to imitate real book covers that often repeat the book title in smaller printing at the side. You can also add details like the author's name, issue date (for ezines)

and so on.

Now, we might say we have a basic cover design done here. A very simple and elegant design with a utilitarian charm to it, but we are not stopping here. Or else you'll probably sue me for a refund or something.

But seriously, if you are creating special reports or mini E-books to be given away, why not create a simple cover, just like this one, to push your conversion? An image like this takes just about five minutes to create and it gives your special report more “tangibility”, and hence a potentially greater response from visitors.

Anyway, let's continue with the design...

At this stage, it would be useful to grab a stock photo of something related to your E-book. Let's say yours is a recipe E-book – get a photograph of cooking utensils or steaming delicious food. If your E-book is about Internet marketing, get images of bank notes or computers.

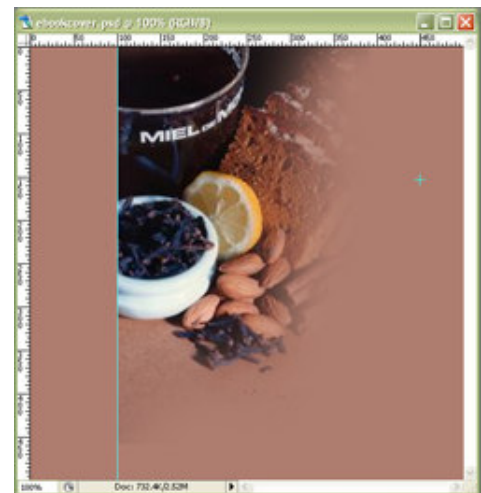
Let's say we are going to create a cover for a recipe E-book. First, I hopped on to my favourite stock photo site and found this photo which would be perfect for the eCover.



Now, load your photograph in Photoshop. The following are the steps that I have chosen to use the photograph to design the cover, it's not compulsory to follow it verbatim as you may have your own ideas for the design.

Anyway, I first aligned the photograph of the edibles to the 100 pixels margin and the top of the document. Note that I have painted the background a similar brown shade.

Then, I added a **Layer Mask** and used a big, soft brush to



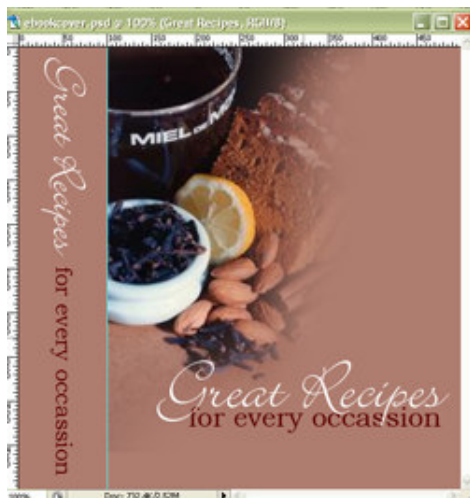
paint in some black shades in the layer mask of the photograph.

Basically, in a layer mask, painting in black shades will make your layer transparent, and white shades opaque. Any grey in between is a variation of opacities – the darker the grey, the more transparent. For softer transitions between the picture and the background, you might want to use bigger brush diameters and lower hardness.

Now that we have the basic graphic designed, it is time to add typography. The first step is to add in the title of the book. For this recipe book, I chose a stylish script font the evokes a feeling of class.

For some variation, I used a serif font for the second half of the title.

*Note: Script fonts are similar to calligraphy, often with long curly strokes. Serif fonts are fonts with curlies at the end; fonts like Times New Roman are serif fonts.*



Keep in mind that your typography has to be large enough because you will have to distort the whole cover later on. If your text is too small, the text will be pixelated when you distort the cover.

Then, I added the same title to the side portion of the cover. Just copy the two title text layers and rotate them 90 degrees clockwise.

At this point, it is advisable to save the cover image as a .psd file so that you can always come back and correct any mistakes or make any changes. Please heed my advice as I have been there before. It is really terrible to have to redo everything from scratch just to change a single sentence on your eCover.

Alright, now we are moving on to the exciting part, distorting it into a box-shaped 3D cover.

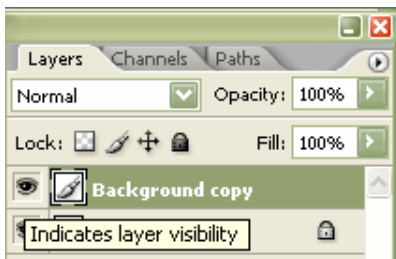
# Chapter 3

## Folding the Cardboard Box

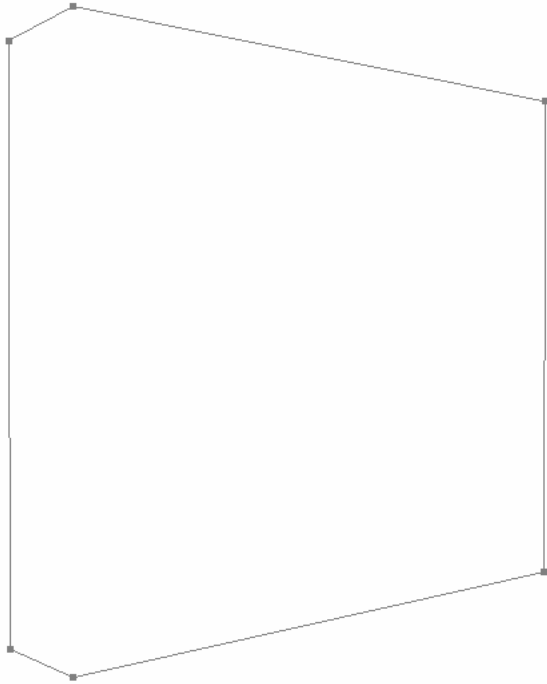
In this chapter, we are going to take our finalized cover design and fold it up into a 3D box-shaped image. The first step is to flatten your cover design. Go to *Layer > Flatten image*. You should have only one layer in your layer palette now.

Now, go to *File > New* and open a new 1024 X 768 document. Go back to your eCover document and right-click the single remaining layer in your layer palette, and go to *Duplicate Layer...* Under the Destination fieldset, you will be able to choose the target document to duplicate the layer in. Choose the document *untitled-1* in the drop down menu (assuming *untitled-1* is the document name of your 1024 X 768 blank document).

After this step, you should now have a copy of your eCover image on a single layer on your 1024 X 768 document. We're going to need the extra workspace in this large document.

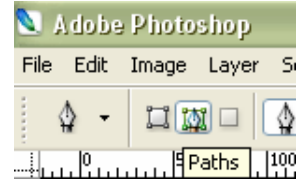


First, press the *eye icon* next to the eCover layer to hide it temporarily. We can bring it back later on, when we need to work on it, by clicking on the same spot.



Next, we are going to define the shape of our 3D box. You may use the Pen Tool to create your own outline of the box, something in a 3D perspective like the image to the left.

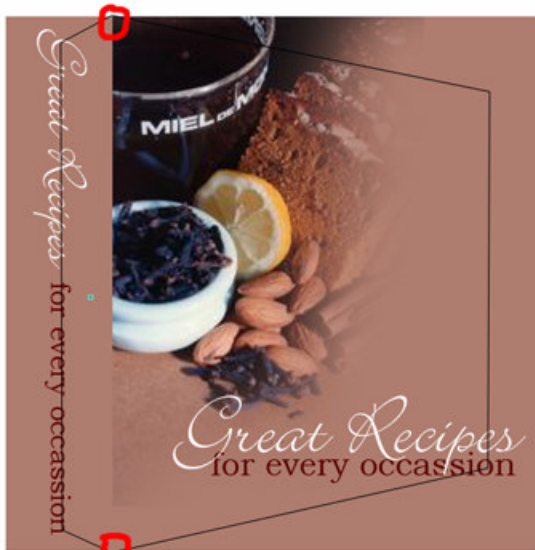
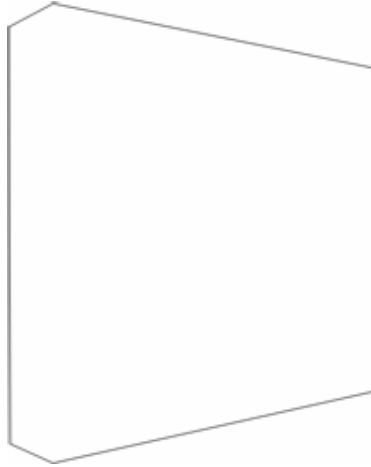
Alternatively, you may load the image file *outline-ref.jpg* which is included with this E-book to use as a reference. Just select the **Pen Tool**, set the mode to “Paths” (as shown in the screenshot) and click on the vertices to trace the shape of the box.



After you're done, we'll need to turn that into an actual outline. This can easily be done by right-clicking the canvas (with the Pen Tool still selected) and choosing *Make Selection*. Press OK in the dialogue box that appears without changing any options.

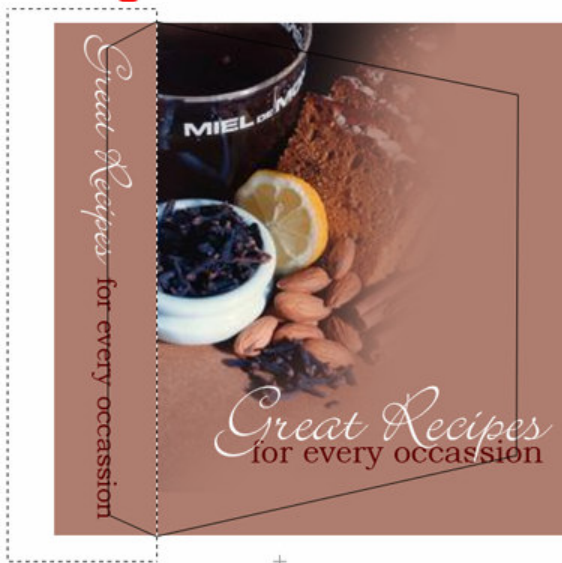
Now, make a new layer for the outline. Then, go to *Edit > Stroke*. Enter *1 px* for Width and choose black for the colour. Then press OK. Now, press *Enter* to cancel the path and *CTRL+D* to deselect the selection.

What you should end up with on the screen is an outline of a 3D box.



Now, reveal the eCover design layer by pressing the eye icon beside that layer in the Layer Palette.

The design should appear **below** the box outline. What you should do now is position the cover design so that the line where the cover side and the cover front meets lines up with the corners of the corresponding side-front line on the 3D outline. These are circled in red in the picture for your ease of reference.



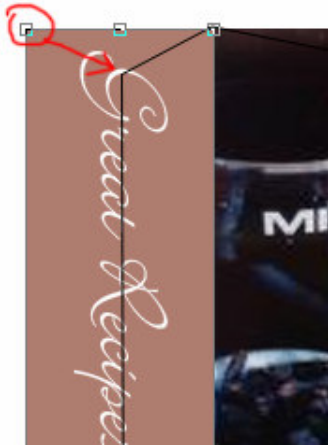
If your eCover design is smaller than the outline such that it does not line up perfectly, just resize the outline until it roughly fits the height of the design. To do this, just select the outline layer, press CTRL + D and drag the transform points to resize it. Remember to press Shift while doing so to retain the aspect ratio.

Now, switch to the eCover design layer. Select the *Rectangular Marquee Tool* and drag a selection from the top left corner of the design.

You'll want the selection to cover the whole side-cover design, hence automatically lining up with the side-front line.

You may want to zoom in to adjust your selection for accuracy. To do this, press *Ctrl + Plus*. To zoom out, press *Ctrl + Minus*.

After making your selection, you'll want to make it fit perfectly with the side cover design. To do this, press and hold *Ctrl + Shift + Alt* while clicking on your cover design layer in the Layer Palette. The selection will automatically fit the size of the left (side) portion of your cover design.



Now, we are coming to the most exciting part, distorting the cover!

Press *Ctrl + T* to activate the transform gizmo. Then, hold *Ctrl* and drag the **top left vertex** from its original position to the **top left corner** of the box outline, like the screenshot.

After you're done, do the same for the **bottom left vertex**. While holding *Ctrl*, drag it to the **bottom left corner** of the 3D box outline.

This process is repeated as well for the right (front) portion of the cover. First, make a selection that fits the right portion of the design, then *Ctrl + T* to distort the cover. Lastly, you may delete the outline layer when you're satisfied with your image.

If you have done everything right, you will be able to achieve something similar to this image:





Obviously, this is what the majority of the so-called “eCover designers” are making you pay for – a **simple distortion routine**. Now that we have uncovered their “little” secret, we are going to go a step further and make the design even more realistic by applying some simple lighting and shadowing techniques that I have derived myself!

This extra edge I’m going to share with you will make your eCovers tonnes more realistic than what most people have out there!

# Chapter 4

## Lighting and Shadow

Alright, in this chapter, you will learn a very simple technique to cast light onto your eCover, making it more realistic. You may think that by “lighting”, I’m going to teach you how to make the image lighter in certain parts to emulate a real light.

Well, quite the opposite. We are going to make the side of the cover darker, so that the front of the cover appears *lighter*.

First, use the *Rectangular Marquee Tool* to select the side of the cover:



Then, go to *Image > Adjustments > Brightness/Contrast*. Drag the Brightness slider to the left

until you get a noticeable contrast between the brightness of the side and the front. However, you still want the side to be bright enough for the details (text) to be viewable.

As a reference, I have included my version of the cover image with the darkened side.



Now, we're going to add in the shadow for the box. Since the light source is from the right (it falls on the front part of the box), the shadow will be cast behind the box, towards the left side of the image.

First, create a new layer and position it underneath the cover image but above the *Background* layer. We will refer to this layer as the shadow layer from now on. Select the **Pen Tool** and draw a region that roughly covers the base of the box but also extending a little to the back. You'll need a little imagination to do this, but you can copy the following if you are not an artist:



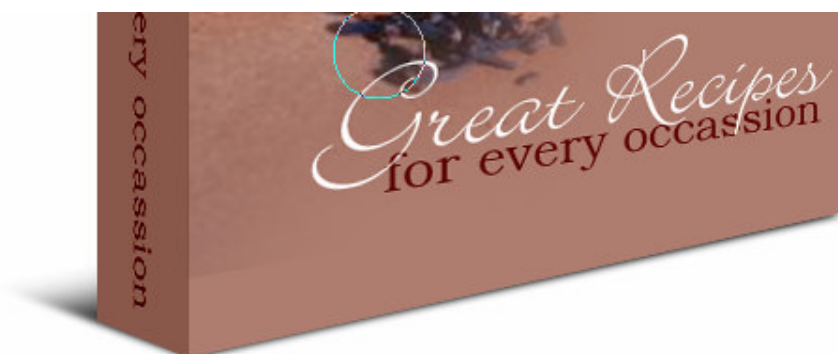
Then, turn it into a marquee selection by right-clicking anywhere on the canvas and choosing *Make Selection...* After that, fill the selection with pure black. You should get an image like this:

Now, go to *Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur* and enter a small radius for the blur. For example, a value of 2px will be sufficient.

Next, choose the *Eraser Tool* and choose a large soft tip. Erase along the extended part of the shadow so that you end up with a blurred end.



This image should give you a clear picture of what I mean:



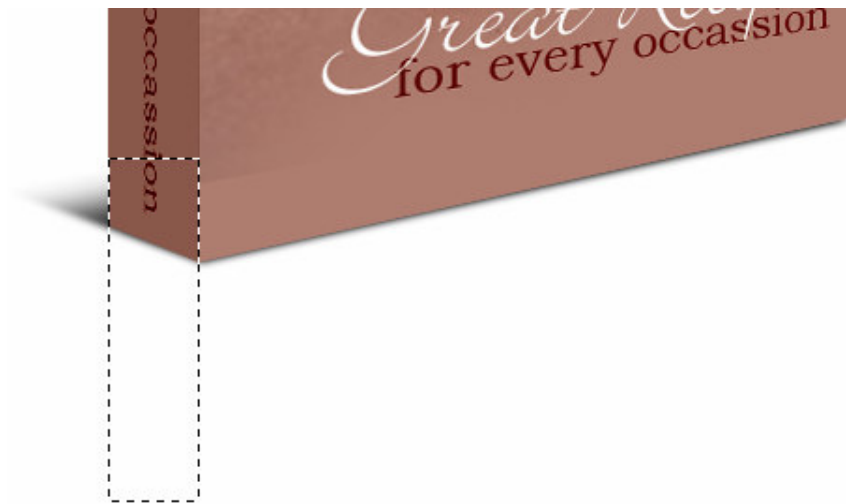
This is the complete image:



# Chapter 5

## Adding Reflection

In this chapter, we're going to add a reflection of the eCover on the ground to make it appear more attractive. I just can't figure out why, but people like reflections. Anyway, here goes:

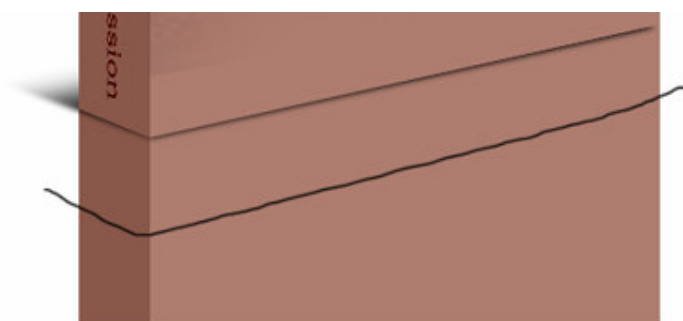


downwards.

First, create another layer, for the reflections, below the “shadow” layer and the *background* layer.

On this layer, use the *Rectangular Marquee Tool* to make a selection which is the same width of the side portion of the cover, extending

Then, use the *Eyedropper Tool* to sample the image of the side cover. Then, fill the selection with the colour you have sampled. On the same layer, do the same for the right part too. You will end up with something like this:



Now, use the *Eraser Tool* with a soft, big tip to erase along the line as shown. The key is to erase along the reflected part, keeping your strokes parallel to the side of the box.

However, remember to keep a considerable amount of the “reflection” intact. Then, apply a 2px Gaussian Blur to the reflection and you’re done!

This is how the final result should look like:



You have just successfully created your own professional eCover and saved at least \$99 from hiring your own graphic designer – and that's just one eCover!

You can now create unlimited eCovers professionally for yourself in a very short time without having to engage a graphic designer or use software in the process!

To Your Graphic Designing Success!